

Identification Notes

for wildlife law enforcement

CATEGORY: MAMMALS

Scientific Name/s: *Ursidae; Felidae*

Common Name/s: bears, big cats

"Fangs!"

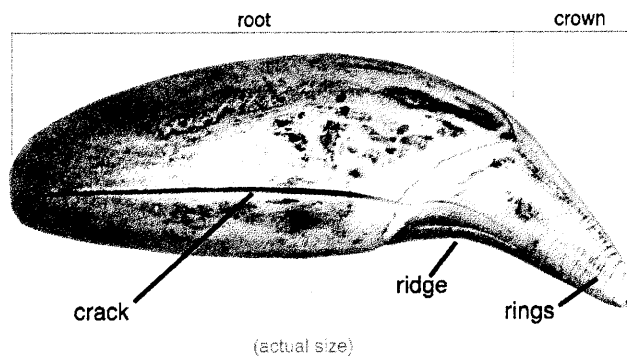
Distinguishing canine teeth of ursids and felids

The canine teeth of bears (*Ursidae*) and cats (*Felidae*) are prized for use as ornaments and fetishes because of their intrinsic shape and symbolism. They may be faked (carved from bone or ivory) or substituted (as bear for tiger, or vice versa), depending on the customer's expectation or interest. Preliminary identification is possible, at least to the level of Family, by observation of the following morphological details:

All canine teeth tend to crack longitudinally when dried. Sharp-edged cracks may extend into the rounded edges of a groove. In both families, longitudinal ridges of enamel occur on inner curves and sides of the tooth crowns. The larger species will exceed 2 inches in total length.

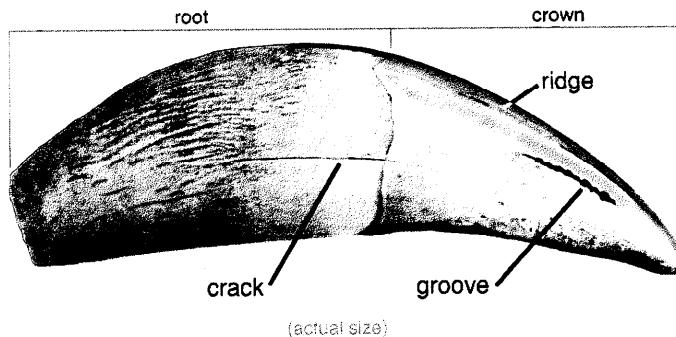
Family *Ursidae*, Genus *Helarctos* (shown), also *Ursus*

Sides of canines have no grooves; tips of enamel have fine brown rings



Family *Felidae*, Genus *Panthera* (*Panthera tigris* shown)

Sides of canines have one or more grooves. The grooves may be pitted.



REFERENCE: Yates, B. C. 1996. Types of mammalian teeth. IDentification Note M-96-2.

IDentification Notes and other Lab information available at:

<http://www.lab.fws.gov/for-lab.htm>